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Osborne Wight

1792

MEMOIRS

OF

HILDEBRAND FREEMAN, Esq.

OR A SKETCH OF

IGBL ang

"THE RIGHTS OF MAN."

A RECENT STORY FOUNDED UPON FACTS,

AND

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

"Those who will not take advice, may take warning."

ENGLISH PROVERB.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR R. EDWARDS,

NO. 142, NEW BOND-STREET.

1792.

126

1 R.B.23 a.6474



15-2-78

TO THE
PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

THIS
SKETCH OF MY LIFE,
WRITTEN
FOR THEIR USE AND INSTRUCTION,
IS INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND,
AND COUNTRYMAN,
HILDEBRAND FREEMAN.

*Easy Hill,
February, 1792.*

E R R A T A.

Page 19, *for* where this doctrine was rapidly carrying into execution, *read* in *which* this doctrine was much involved.

25, *for* principels, *read* principals.

28, *for* others only *no* personal security, *read* others only *on* personal security.

51, *for* to *aim* increasing powers, *read* to *gain* increasing powers.

52, *for* no dignities *no* reflect, *read* no dignities *to* reflect.

M E M O I R S

OF

HILDEBRAND FREEMAN, Esq.

I AM not one of those, who, induced by the love of fame or money, are anxious to thrust themselves forward on the public notice. I feel a higher motive—a wish to instruct others by my own *example*; and as the little history of the preceding part of my life comes more immediately home “to men’s bosoms and feelings,” than those of more illustrious characters, I am not without the hope of its producing the desired effect. Having said thus much, I shall proceed to my history without farther introduction.

I am the son of a clergyman, who lived in Yorkshire, who, beside a comfortable living in the church, possessed a paternal estate of about four hundred pounds per year. My father designed me, his only child, for the University; but

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catching a putrid fever at a County Assizes, which carried him off in a few days, he left me, at the age of thirteen, under the care of my mother, who was his sole executrix.

My mother's name was *Level*; she was the daughter of Firebrace Level, Esq. of Warwickshire, an Unitarian Dissenter, of the strictest discipline and principles. She inherited her father's spirit and doctrines to a tittle, and immediately after her husband's death, put me under the care of a dissenting clergyman from Birmingham, with full power to instruct me in all the religious and political principles of his sect.

Dr. Meekly (for so my tutor was named) was a man, partly from constitution, and partly from reflection, who deputed himself, as far as it respected his manner of living and private dealings with mankind, in a very becoming and exemplary manner. His doctrines however, both religious and political, being *particular*, did not qualify him for large circles; he therefore conversed principally within the pale of his own sect, though he disseminated his opinions in his writings pretty plentifully. Being so young, when I was first put under his care, as to have few settled ideas of my own, and being naturally of a ductile

tile disposition, I was in many respects qualified to imbibe and reflect his principles.

Beside instructing me in all the common courses of a school education, for which I will do him the justice to say he was eminently qualified, he used to fill up a great part of my leizure time in talking to me of religious and political doctrines, which he called his *Evening conversations*. His custom was, to propose and slightly open a topic on the one evening, giving me time to turn it in my mind, in order to discuss it the next. He relied much on the use of these conversations, and often spoke of them in the following terms :—

“ It is perhaps more necessary for boys to bear and see, than to read. What they learn merely from books is very often considered a mere drudgery, and is therefore got through for form sake, without making any great impression. This study comes likewise under the arrangement of duty and stated business, which to young minds are generally drawbacks on that zeal and ardour which should inspire and accompany knowledge. Whereas in those *conversations*, taken up at occasional times, the mind is seemingly left at play upon the subject, and information is had cheaper,

fuller, and *more to the tutor's way of thinking*. The personal influence of the preceptor too does much; he can either enforce by the superiority of his station, or win by the suavity of his manners. He can yield to his pupil in little points, the better to gain his confidence in greater; and thus by managing and moulding him as occasion and circumstances present, he is fitted to receive every impression."

In the course of these conversations, he regularly opened to me all his religious and political opinions, and though many of these, coming from any other person, would have shocked my original principles, yet he delivered them with such persuasion, meekness, and seeming philosophy, as always claimed my most profound attention. His leading principle in both these subjects was an *universal* and UNBOUNDED TOLERATION, which he said was the undoubted *right of man*, and which no particular government, either in church or state, ought to wrest from him. Descending to particulars, he would thus speak of RELIGION:—

"There is nothing disgraces Religion so much, as the many forms, ceremonies, and speculative opinions, with which it is encrusted. All of them, the original manufacture of Churchmen (or, as he at other times used to call them, with
more

more spleen, *Hierarchy* men) calculated for interested purposes, and taken up by their successors either from the same motives, or those of sloth or professional ignorance; whereas, if men would but study their own species in a philosophical light, they would best see their ends and use, and form a religion of nature upon the simplest and truest foundations.

“ For instance—most religions in the world hold up the doctrine of divisibility of *matter* and *spirit*. Some giving the strangest opinions of the time and mode of their junction and separation, but all agreeing in one common error, that *the soul is a distinct being from the body*, lodging in it only for a time, but directing and governing it in the most arbitrary manner possible. How this doctrine should have gained footing amongst mankind is to me amazing, considering the lights philosophy has shed around us for the last century; whereas nothing is *more plain than the contrary*.

“ Man does not consist of two principles so essentially different from one another as *matter* and *spirit*, which are always described as having no one common property, by means of which they can affect or act upon each other. The one occupying

cupying space, and the other, not only not occupying the least imaginable portion of space, but incapable of bearing any relation to it—inso-much, that properly speaking, my mind is no more in my body than it is in the moon, the *whole man being of one uniform composition*, and that the property of perception, as well as the other powers that are termed mental, are the result (whether necessary or not) of such an organical structure as that of the brain; consequently that the *whole man becomes extinct at death*, and that we have no hope of surviving the grave, but what is derived from *the scheme of revelation*.*

Continuing his discourse, and observing my fixed attention, "Don't you see the irrefragable force of this theory—I'm sure I have observed in you an incipency of perception relative to this *new light*, which will ultimately ground you in the principles of *true religion*—therefore permit me to elucidate this by some practical observations, which will bring you more fully to decide yourself upon what otherwise you might call mere speculation.

* I since found that this reasoning was literally taken from Dr. Priestley's Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit.--Vide Preface to that work, p. 14 and 15.

" Man

“ Man then, as I have before observed, being one *uniform composition*, his perception, or seat of thought, by the circumstances that universally accompany it, is a property of the nervous system, or rather of the brain; because, as far as we can judge, the faculty of thinking, and a certain state of the brain, always accompany and correspond to one another, which is the very reason why we believe that any property is inherent in any substance whatsoever. There is no instance of any man retaining the faculty of thinking when his brain was destroyed; and whenever that faculty is impeded or injured, there is sufficient reason to believe that the brain is disordered in proportion, and therefore we are necessarily led to consider the latter as the seat of the former.

“ Moreover, as the faculty of thinking in general ripens and comes to maturity with the body, it is also observed to decay with it, and if in some cases the mental faculties continue vigorous when the body in general is enfeebled, it is evidently because, in those particular cases, the brain is not much affected by the general cause of weakness. But, on the other hand, if the brain alone be affected, as by a blow on the head, by actual pressure within the skull, by sleep

sleep, or by inflammation, the mental faculties are universally affected in proportion.

“ Likewise, as the mind is affected in consequence of the affections of the body and brain, so the body is liable to be reciprocally affected by the affections of the mind, as is evident in the visible effects of all strong passions, hope or fear, love or anger, joy or sorrow, exultation or despair. These are certainly inrefragable arguments that *it is one and the same thing that is subject to these affections*, and that they are necessarily dependent upon one another. In fact, there is just the same reason to conclude that the powers of sensation and thought are the necessary result of a particular organization, as that sound is the necessary result of a particular concussion of the air; for in both cases, equally, the one constantly accompanies the other; and there is not in nature a stronger argument for a necessary connection of any cause and any effect.

“ Besides gaining the truth in the adoption of this doctrine, there is another great advantage attending this system of materialism, which is—

• Dr. Priestley's Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit, p. 27, 28.

that

According to this, an instrument sounds, when struck, & a man produces his voice from the same mechanical principle. carrying reasoning to an hand organ & a man eye

that we thereby get rid of a great number of difficulties, which exceedingly clog and embarrass the opposite system—such for instance as these. “What becomes of the soul during sleep—in a swoon—and especially after death?” Also, “What was the condition of it before it became united to the body, and at what time did that union take place?”

“In short, my dear pupil, he used to say, (taking me by the hand with a zeal for conversion, which I have since found out to be more dangerous in the proportion it was sincere) this jargon of the soul and body, the bane of modern philosophy, has no foundation in truth. Man is one uniform composition, and, as such, thinks, acts, and regulates all his notions; nor has he any hope of surviving the grave, but what, as I have before observed, is derived from the *scheme of revelation*.”

Though I listened to these discourses with attention, I still felt myself strongly attached to two articles of the Established Church, which were taught me by my father at a very early age, as among the leading principles of Religion,

* Dr. Priestley's Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit, p. 41.

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viz.

Dr. Priestley's Argument ridiculous & light
good

viz. the necessity of an *Hierarchy*—and the *Divinity of our Saviour*; and having one day hinted to my tutor my attachment to these doctrines, he seemed so irritated at my weakness and obstinacy (as he was pleased to term them) that he, for the first time, threw off the mask of insinuation, and thus explained himself;—

“ In respect to the first, Sir,” says he, “ after the many discourses I have had with you on the principles of general toleration, and the ambition and priestcraft of bishops—I must send you back to your better reflections, by telling you, once for all, that I look upon an *Hierarchy* as the *bane of Religion*; it is the *fungus* of an establishment upon the noble plant of Christianity, and such vermin deserve no mercy. *

“ As to the second, I see how you have been deceived by the early discourses of your father, who was a member of this *blessed Hierarchy*, and who, no doubt, expected to be a bishop himself all in good time; but do you suppose that all the Clergy of the Church of England really believe what they have subscribed, or ever did be-

* Vide Dr. Priestley's Letters to the Students of New College, Hackney, and to Mr. Burke.

lieve,

lieve, that there are three persons in one god-head—that Jesus Christ is a proper object of prayer, and that he is to be abjured by *his bloody sweat and passion*—and by his *holy* nativity and circumcision?—No, these doctrines are abhorrent to reason, and contradicted by the whole tenure of the Scripture.”

He then referred to several texts of Scripture, which he explained according to his own ideas, and concluded with the following observation on Religion in general :—*

“ The most equitable thing in any country, and the best method of getting a true and useful religion, is to leave every person at liberty to think and choose for himself, and to support that which he prefers. There being then no undue bias on the mind, that form of religion will at length establish itself and become universal, which shall be found by experience to be most deserving of it, and the state will thereby be relieved from a great part of its present care and incumbrance.” †

* Dr. Priestley's Letter to Mr. Pitt, on the Subject of the Test Act, p. 31.

† Ibid, p. 41.

Though these two last doctrines affected me with very serious considerations, they did not make so deep an impression on me as at first to gain my entire belief. Though I was but thirteen years of age when I came under the tuition of Dr. Meekly, I had been educated in the principles of the Church of England, as by law established, and my father, who, as I before observed, was a pastor of that Church, inculcated in me doctrines so repugnant to these, that it was a considerable time before they could be eradicated. But what will not the force of constant precept, authority, and habits, effect? I heard no other subjects at school, or at table—it was echoed from the pulpit and from his visitors; I read books of a similar tendency—and heard those books applauded by persons whom I was taught to look up to with veneration and respect; so that, in short, the current bore so strong against me, that it was next to an impossibility for me to withstand its collected force.

I remember one day, that being very deeply engaged in reading Hume's two treatises on *suicide* and the *immortality of the soul*, in my own room—my preceptor broke in upon me, rather unexpectedly, to ask me some questions relative to the school. I seemed confounded at his approach,

proach, not knowing how far he might approve of doctrines which spoke out in a more decisive tone than himself upon these subjects. But how much was I surprised, when, casting his eyes over the book, he exclaimed, "Oh! I see you are determined to be a *philosopher*—well, I'll leave you to your studies," and immediately quitted the room, with evident signs in his face of not being displeased with my studies.

This little incident decided my opinion relative to those doctrines; for understanding and relishing Hume's essays rather better than those of my preceptor, on account of what I then thought the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his style, I used the *former* as a *key to the latter*, and thus I became a MATERIALIST upon accumulated proofs of conviction.

My preceptor was the first to see this entire change in my mind, and secretly rejoiced at it. By way of experiment, he recapitulated most of the conferences we held together, wherein he not only found me a patient listener, but a much more improved reasoner. I now ventured to expatiate upon some of the doctrines he taught me with a spirit and force that seemed to charm him—he paid me many eulogiums on my proficiency,

ficiency, and said that he did not doubt but that I should one day become an *apostle of religious toleration*.

Having thus embraced new principles in respect to Religion, it is necessary (as I professedly write for the instruction of others) to state what I gained in my mind by them.

In the first place, I got rid of all the ceremonies of the church I was originally brought up in, as unnecessary aids to the spirit of devotion, and felt myself freely at liberty to choose only what I thought myself to be right, founded upon metaphysical enquiries.

In the second place, I dismissed all those fears and doubts attendant on the belief of a future state, which, though they may be good seconds in enforcing the principles of moral justice, are great checks on the spirit of human dealings.

In the third place, instead of respecting the dignity and immortality of the soul, and dreading it as the watchful guardian of my conduct, I now only attended to that of the *body*. This taught me to look with a greater degree of equality on mankind, and to feel myself more

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at liberty in the enjoyment of all those indulgencies which did not militate against the laws of my country.

Finally, I felt myself in a higher state of complaisance with my own mind ; for as my doctrines were above the ordinary modes of conception, so I conceived myself to be above the ordinary ranks of men. I had worked myself into such a rooted belief of them, that I imagined all those who differed from me were *fools* or *knaves*—and as such I had little scruple in treating them, thinking by this to reform the world to my way of thinking, and obtain the rewards of my ambitious perseverance.

My creed being thus established, my preceptor next took up the business of *civil government*, which seemed to be every way fitted to his ideas of Religion. The origin of all power he defined to belong to the people, who, notwithstanding laws, vesting that power in representatives they had chosen, still could be modified, altered, abridged, or taken away by them *ad libitum*.—That this *energy from without* (as was his favourite expression) was the palladium of English liberty—to purge the corruption of their representatives, and keep them in those re-

stricted lines which would best answer the public service.

Of the subordinations of life, as they respected rank and privilege, he treated them with the utmost contempt, as breaking in upon his favourite principle, the *equality of mankind*; and when I pleaded the necessity of those classes in a state to temper and refine the grosser parts of the public, and compared them to a building which required *greater* as well as *smaller* pillars for its support; when I spoke of the emulation these rewards held out to virtue, talents, and magnanimity, as the great public reservoirs of honour, and the checks and restraints which the *pride of family* often had on the meannesses and vices of mankind—he scouted the idea as narrow, base, and servile, and opposed it to that original state of nature, wherein *all men are equal*, and which, as it was taught us from the womb, should conduct us to the grave.

“ Well but, Sir,” said I, “ admitting this doctrine to be philosophically true, how can it be put in practice in England, which by its original constitution, you know, is *monarchical*? Here, at least, our scheme of equality must be broken in upon, by giving certain powers and privileges to

to *one man* as chief magistrate of the people." At this he paused for some time, and rubbing his forehead, as was his custom when he wanted to be on his guard, "Why? Do you think the office of a king so absolutely necessary? Do not several countries at present in the world, as well as formerly, live very happily and well-governed without a King? and is it more worth the while of a people to pay above a million yearly to one man, when they could be served, perhaps better, and at infinitely less expence, by themselves in rotation? Beside, we take the talents of a king who is hereditary upon trust; whereas, were we governed otherwise, we could judge of the talents and integrity of those we elected, and if they did not answer our purpose, even after trial, we could cashier them at any time we thought proper."

In short, it would be tiresome to go into the detail of the doctrines, *civil* and *religious*, which he plied me with day and night, which, with the zeal he descanted on them, the reverence he was held in by all those he lived with, joined to a very exemplary life, enforced them so strongly on my mind, that I became a complete convert to his principles; and whenever we strayed out of the pale of our own sect, and the credit of these prin-

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ciples was to be defended, I had the honour of being permitted his second in the attack, wherein I exerted myself with all the ardour of a young foldier fighting under the eye of his General, where his courage was fure to be feen and to be rewarded.

I continued in this courfe of ftudies till an account was brought me of the death of my mother, whose kindnefs to me was always very bountiful, and who, from time to time, received fuch impreffions of me from my preceptor, as filled her breaft with the moft maternal expreffions of regard. By her will I became poffeffed of the whole of her fortune, which, with that left me by my father, amounted to about fix hundred pounds per year, befides two thoufand pounds in cash. With this fortune I determined to fhift the prefent fcene, and as I was now twenty-two years of age, refolved to fix myfelf in the capital, as the likelielt place to give and receive the benefit of my inftructions. Furnifhing myfelf, therefore, with letters of recommendation to the Rt. Hon. Lord S—, Sir G. S—, the Reverend Docters P— and P—, Dr. R—, Dr. T—, Meffrs. H— T—ke, R. S. D. L—, and a few others, I arrived in London about the latter end of December, 1789.

Though

Though I had never been in the capital before, and had heard much of its general attractions, in respect to buildings, places of public amusement, and pleasures of an endless variety, such is the direction of a mind wholly bent upon one subject—that none of these had any powerful seductions for me. I visited some of them, it is true, but with a coldness which evidently showed my mind was absent. To reduce mankind to, *one naked level in Religion and Politics* was the chief of my ambition, and to this *salutary* point I directed all my studies, enquiries, and industry, with a most unremitting zeal.

I was not a little surprised, however, to find so few profelytes to my new doctrine. When I left Warwickshire, I expected to meet it as the general topic of conversation in the metropolis;—but so far from this, I found the mass of the people not troubling their heads about it. At 'Change the merchants and traders were busy about their own concerns, and, whenever they even chanced to talk of French affairs, (where this doctrine was rapidly carrying into execution) they seemed to speak of them as a matter of curiosity, in which they were very little interested, except as it respected the price of exchange amongst those concerned in the trade of France. At the West end

of the town it was still worse—here domestic politics, pleasure, and scandal, absorbed the whole conversation, and even most of the very French themselves, whom I used to mix with in genteel circles, were so *aristocratic* in their notions, that I could neither give, or receive, much consolation or instruction. Amongst the smaller circles of *Unitarian* Dissenters, in a few select coffee-houses in the City, and at Revolution dinners, indeed I found some comfort. Here all my ideas of the *rights of man*, to their full extent, had their full play—and at these and the *Constitutional*, and other smaller societies, we modelled both church and state as we liked, and drank success to our principal reformers in pious libations.

I continued in these habits for several months, and though, in conjunction with many of my brethren in religious and political opinions, I daily waited for “those energies from without,” which were to restore *perfect freedom to the constitution*, and *equality amongst mankind*; yet, upon due consideration, I found we were by far too few to ferment the large mass of the public, and that we deceived ourselves, in point of number, by the sound of our own voices. We complained, amongst ourselves, of this sluggishness
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of the public, predicted their ruin, and the general bankruptcy of the nation—nay, we compared them to the Capadocians, who refused liberty when it was offered them—but all in vain—their common reply was, “ They did not feel any immediate inconveniences in either religious or political opinions, shook their heads at the impossibility of perfect virtues, talked of the briskness of trade and the high price of stocks, and left us, with a sneer, to enjoy the fruits of our superior wisdom.”

Still I was not without hopes—We had amongst us some daring spirits that would attempt any thing—Spirits, I then thought,

“ Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,

“ And rule it when ’twas wildest.”

And, in particular, *one man*, whom I looked up to as the future saviour of his country, a man whom the greatest difficulties could not impede, nor persecution intimidate. But as I knew him most intimately, and as he opened his mind to me very freely upon all occasions, and as I had likewise many opportunities of observing his conduct in several trying situations, I will attempt a sketch of his character,

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This man was originally bred a clergyman of the Established Church, and possessed learning and understanding sufficient to make himself respectable as a parish priest; but his ruling principle being *VANITY*, it influenced the whole of his heart, and guided his understanding; hence he took the first occasion to break through the narrow limits of his order, and threw himself into all the political ferments of the day. He was at the head of every thing that was dashing and eccentric, and for the purpose of performing this character with more propriety, he sold his church livings, exchanged his *caxon* for a *queue*, and abandoned the department of a clergyman in every respect.

As a professor of liberty, in its modern signification, he attacked every thing, no matter how high or venerable, that he thought militated against his ideas of an abstract constitution. The higher the power, and the more rooted the principle, the more it excited his zeal for attack—it was all one to him, whether he fought singly or in numbers; how far it made him friends, or enemies; whether it mended, or disjoined his reputation, or his fortune—he found the full value of his labours in his *vanity*. This omnivorous being, which has no choice in its food,
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and which even will talk of its own faults and vices to draw attention and excite surprise, swallowed up his whole soul, and heated and supported him through an infinite number of ridiculous, dangerous, and fruitless experiments.

In the cluster of these incongruities, he had one quality, that, to most other men, would be found highly useful in the progress of life, which was a *remarkable command of temper whenever it suited his inclinations*. He would occasionally hear torrents of abuse poured upon him, without seemingly feeling the least passion, or deranging his ideas in reply. But this, instead of being a check-string on his faults, served up but another dish to his vanity, he only used it as the engine of party dispute, and if it excited the wonder or applause of the table or the crowd, he was perfectly content.

From such a man it might be imagined, that all the parts of his private life were answerable.—No such thing!—In respect to his dealings with mankind, I believe him to be correct and regular; indeed, the contrary would too much check the independency of his spirit—but in all the decencies and *petites morales* he had no guide but his immediate inclinations. He lived freely
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with women, and made no great scruple about declaring the connection. He talked as freely of Religion; and though the sacred function he once possessed (if acted upon by no higher principle than shame) should have kept him delicate upon this head, either the folly of being distinguished, or the laxity of his principles, often prompted him to laugh at the system of Christianity, in a manner that would disgrace the most dissipated in the earliest careers of life.

I must confess this part of his conduct often affronted my feelings—but we can no more spy defects in our friends, than in our lovers. I therefore considered all these as the balances of a great mind, which should be overlooked for greater considerations; and that, however they may affect his character for the sober pleasures of life, could not reach him as a politician, where all was grand, scientific, and truly constitutional. From this man I expected wonders. I was foolish enough to compare him to Oliver Cromwell, and flattering myself with the parallel, was inclined to believe a revolution might be obtained principally by his means.

A little time, however, convinced me of my mistake; I saw that, amongst his own party, he

was treated merely as a man whose zeal may be occasionally useful, but who carried his fanatical policy to almost a degree of madness. They suffered him, therefore, to act by himself, and his schemes were so bold, visionary, and impracticable, that I soon found nothing could be done by him. This led me to look round and see from what quarter I could expect a completion of my wishes, and here I began to take a nearer view of the politics of my friends.

I found those under the denomination of the WHIG CLUB, were secretly playing another game than that of a *Revolution*. It was *wormwood* to the *heads* of that party, who thereby would lose their ranks and privileges in the state. It was equally disagreeable to the *tail*, who could not otherwise than by such principles get into power. They, therefore, understood a *Revolution* to mean no more than *a Revolution in Administration*; and however they might occasionally and distantly encourage those spirits who were serious in other notions, it now became evident to me, that they used them only as so many stepping-stones to place and power.

The CONSTITUTIONAL CLUBS chiefly contented themselves with eating and drinking, and giving patriotic toasts, without establishing any fund,

fund, or making any arrangement fit to carry so great a work into execution. Some of them, no doubt, had higher views, and would, under proper leaders and more convenient circumstances, have effected any thing. Such as I have before observed, some of the pastors of the Unitarian Dissenters, with several wealthy lay followers, two or three disappointed Churchmen, with a proportionate class of those who are *disappointed in every thing*; but the body wanted a proper cement. The whole did not consist of above three or four hundred, and out of these there were not above twenty who had firmness enough to put all to the risk.

From this review I considered what I had to do in my own person—my principles leading me directly to a general reform in church and state, I saw they could not be indulged *here*; I therefore, after some debate with myself, determined on going to that country where a *Revolution* had already been achieved, and which, I then thought, in the language of a great statesman, “was one of the most glorious fabricks ever raised by human integrity.”—“There,” said I, “I shall have an opportunity of studying and acting in the great school of freedom, and of seeing the noblest theories reduced to the most constitutional

stitutional practice. There, perhaps, I may assist in giving my mite to this great undertaking, at least I shall gain that experience, from the mistakes and improvements of others, which may one day tend to the reformation of my own country."

When I had made up my mind to this business, I took another review, which it would have been more prudent in me to have began about much sooner, I mean a review of my own finances, which to my utter surprise, I found most miserably deranged.—Tho' I had not been above one year and a half in London, and was by no means what is called a man of expence, the two thousand pounds I brought to town with me (and which my friend Dr. P. would not let me place in the funds, on account of an *assured* fall of *twenty per cent*) were all gone—Three hundred pounds per year of my estate were mortgaged for nearly the full value; and the remainder of my rents, from the usual causes (the neglect or absence of the principal) not regularly remitted to me.

How I got rid of all this money in so short a time, at first surprised me, till looking over some memoranda, they explained particulars to me. There I found I had lent a great part of it to

needy brethren, acting in the same cause. Some without any voucher whatever, and others only no personal security.—Nay I was foolish enough to mortgage *two thousand* pounds of my estate to lend to a man I never was in company with but once, but who I was told was not only the cleverest fellow in the House of Commons, but in the Kingdom—who beside the excellency of his head, had a heart to risque any thing, had spoken more decidedly in favour of the French Revolution than any member in either house, and would, in case of *one remove*, undoubtedly be the first Minister of this Country.

Bristol The only principal or interest, however, I ever got from this *future Minister of Great Britain*, or any of my debtors, was a letter of recommendation from another *great man* (an intimate Colleague of this *futute Minister*) to Monsieur B——, a leading member in the last National Assembly of France, recommending me as a person “zealous in the general cause of liberty, and highly affected to the French Revolution.” But as my introduction to this *great man* possesses not only some singularity, but shows the influence of female minds upon the highest political characters, I am induced to think a particular description of it belongs to these Memoirs; which

which I cannot too often declare, are only given to the public for the benefit of their instruction by my example.

It was four o'clock (by my reckoning in the evening) when I waited upon the Hon. *****
 ***, being previously told that this was his general hour of rising, and the most convenient time to speak to him upon business. He had just issued from his bed-chamber as I had been shown into the breakfast-room, and so grotesque in dress and manner, that I had nearly lost my balance in making my bow to him. He was wrapped up in a bear-skin loose morning coat, which reached down to his feet—his hair all dishevelled—flannel drawers—a pair of slippers and no stockings—and thus accoutred, making a slight inclination of his head at seeing me, he tossed himself into an arm-chair by the fire-side,

“ So, Sir (says he, yawning) you are going to Paris, I find,”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Then you are going to breathe the truest atmosphere of liberty in the World. The French have certainly set us a great example, and
 it

it is our own fault if we don't profit by it—'Do you speak the language?'"

" I do, Sir."

" So much the better—you will have an opportunity of attending the National Assembly to advantage, beside private conversation. Your correspondence here too may be useful. Do, my dear (says he, yawning, and turning to a middle-aged lady at the breakfast-table, not handsome enough however to induce any ideas of gallantry) do, says he, talk to the Gentleman a little upon this business—for, 'pon my soul, my head's so muddy this morning, that I can think of nothing till after my morning's ride."

X
The lady, who had been all this while frothing his chocolate at the lower end of the table, immediately turned round, and with a composure which showed her competent to the duties of an *Under-secretary*, entered into all the politics of the two Countries, and talked of names and characters, and the probable issue of things, with a facility and a precision that amazed me. We chatted in this manner for near an hour, when taking up a letter which lay on the bureau " Here Sir, says she, is your letter of recommendation, and

and here are some *secrét* dispatches (answers to the preceding week's correspondence) which you will please to deliver *in person* to Monsieur B——, with Mr.——'s respectful compliments. Saying this, she put the whole into one of those little tin boxes which are used by the King's Messengers, in carrying dispatches to and from the Ministers when in the country, and making me a very polite courtesy, wished me a good journey.—The Honourable Gentleman in the chair nodded his compliments likewise, when I took my leave, and in a few days afterwards reached Paris, in the summer of 1791.

I arrived at the Hotel De Vendosme late in the evening, and the same night sent off my letter of recommendation to Monf. B—— (reserving my dispatches to a personal interview, as directed) with my compliments, to know when I should have the honour of waiting on him. I soon after received a very polite billet, informing me, that as I must be very much fatigued from my journey, and that as the next day was to be a very busy one in the hall, he would beg leave to postpone that pleasure to the day following 10 o'clock. At this hour I accordingly had my audience.

Mr.

Mr. B—— received me with a friendship above common introductory forms, and immediately enquired after my friends, and the success of what he called the *Common Cause*. I replied ingenuously to all his questions; I told him that there were some persons in England zealously attached to the cause of liberty and the French Revolution, and particularized their names (which I afterwards found he knew as well as I did, showing me them enrolled in alphabetical order, in his *journal politique*) but that I was sorry to acquaint him that the cause was by no means general." "Oh!" says he, "all in good time—it was owing to particular circumstances it had its rapidity here—we must wait a while till the wind is strong enough to blow the flame across your channel, and then follows a general conflagration."

"Well but," says he, continuing his discourse, "I find your friend is still attached to *Royalty*, as he recommends *the restoration of the King* in the most urgent terms; but then, indeed, he adds, that 'tis *policy* alone demands this sacrifice, to prevent the other monarchs of Europe from interfering in our affairs.' *Eh bien! Monsieur*—he may be right, but we must discuss this question of policy a little farther first."

As I was totally unacquainted with the contents of these dispatches, I had now a secret which I was not before in possession of. I therefore determined to avail myself of it, bowed assent to his opinion, and soon after took my leave.

When I went home to my lodging, I immediately entered into one of those self-conferences so much recommended by Lord Shaftsbury, and which, upon many occasions, I found very useful in my progress through life. Being a violent republican myself, and knowing the National Assembly then had their King in their power, I thought it madness in them to slip the opportunity of forming themselves into a *Republic*, the most glorious then in my mind, of all existing forms of government. "What then prevents them?" says I "Why the immediate policy of it. What is that policy? Is it that broad and general policy, which looking to the ends of all good government, the welfare and happiness of the people, determines a monarchical form to be the best? No; but a partial time-serving policy, which, regarding the present safety of the legislators, adopts it as the most convenient to keep themselves in power. Am I sure this is the motive? Yes; it is avowed so, "that the
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other monarchs of Europe should have no pretensions to interfere in their quarrel."

The use I made of this conference, was seriously to examine the new constitution, which was just bringing to a conclusion, and then see how far it operated in practice for the farther promotion of liberty, and the good of mankind. I thank God for disposing me to enter into this enquiry with temper, moderation, and impartiality; for tho' my notions, from the effects of my education, ran strong with the current of liberty in its widest extent; yet my natural temper, and love of justice, induced me to yield nothing to the account of party, or partial convenience. I had, besides this, a *presentiment* that I had studied both religion and politics a little too much *upon paper*—Here then was an opportunity to try them by practice—It was an experiment that ages might not afford again, and I entered into it with no less zeal than integrity.

Previously to this, I constantly attended the National Assembly, and as I was as constant an attendant on the House of Commons when I was in England, I had it more in my power to draw comparisons between them; and here I must confess, with all my partiality for the new constitution

tution of France, I found myself greatly disappointed. The *tout ensemble* of the place, gave me the impression of a disputing society, where the members were more solicitous to distinguish themselves by orations to the galleries, or the indulgence of their party passions, than by temperate and sound discussion. Indeed, had they a mind to enter into real business, they must have found it very difficult to do so from the embarrassment of their situation; as the general principle of freedom, which they had established, induced a right, which the meanest citizen aspired to, of being heard before them upon the most trivial business imaginable—Hence not a day passed without petitions from *Schoolmasters, Journalists, Artists, Barbers, Fishwomen, &c. &c.* Objects only cognizable to our Quarter Sessions, and Courts of Conscience; yet, often, in the course of a very important debate, they were obliged to attend to those trifles with a seriousness and importance which would have rendered the members very contemptible, were it not to be attributed to the fear they had of offending the temper of the nation. This growing into a rule, however, threw them into those entanglements, which men, separating from the dignity and spirit of national legislation, are constantly subject to; insomuch, that one day they were

betrayed into a deliberation and eulogium on a private letter from a drunken club in London, which terminated in an order to have the same registered and transmitted to all the municipalities.

Another defect appeared in the National Assembly, which was, their referring all business, they did not choose either to enter upon then, or totally dismiss, to particular committees. This was cutting the gordian knot of politics to a certain degree, 'tis true; but this mode of reference multiplied so daily, that either the business referred to must sleep for ever in the Committees, or, in a little time, grow into such a mass of papers, as must require little short of an eternity of deliberation to arrange.

Another defect, and surely a most material one, I found to arise from their *constant sitting*, to which perhaps nothing can be compared but the *Everlasting Club*, so effectually ridiculed in the Spectator. A perseverance in business, no doubt, is its spirit and expedition; but then that perseverance must be kept within its proper bounds to be useful. All theories should be formed partly by experience, and experience must be frequently brought forward, in order to remedy the

the defects of theories ; but these continual unremitting efforts of the National Assembly, where even

"The Sunday shines no sabbath-day to them,"

must be the source of much mischief and perplexity.

"Those who always labour can have no true judgment, because they never give themselves time to cool. They cannot survey, from the proper point of sight, the work they have finished before they decree its final execution. With our Parliament, the due mixture of business and relaxation is infinitely better managed. We go into the country soberly and dispassionately, to observe the effect of measures on their objects ; but the National Assembly cannot feel, distinctly, how far the people are rendered better and improved, or more miserable and depraved, by what they have done." * In short, from the effects of unremitted labour, men exhaust their attention, and often give up their opinions to obtain that repose which nature has allotted to their condition.

* Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France.

Another

Another defect arose from the heterogeneous mixture of the Assembly, which produced that strange diversity of debate which puzzles and protracts public business. I here found out the force of Lord Chesterfield's remark, "That all great assemblies are little better than mobs:" and what confirmed this observation was, the strange mixture of the *Nobility*, *Clergy*, and *Tier Etat*, whose ideas and expressions, from different modes of education, scarcely ever corresponded, or when they did correspond, took up no inconsiderable time to find out in what they did agree. Those of the *third estate*, in particular, frequently used such language as what we in England would not only call unparliamentary, but approaching to Billingsgate, attended with all that warmth which strong passions, unaided by reason and the effects of good company, generally produce.

Examining all these things with candour, it was impossible for me not to make the above reflections. Being strongly attached, however, to the great cause of *equality—and the Rights of Man*. I was willing to allow, that some such obstacles were necessarily attendant on so great a work, but that the work, when completed, would well answer all its original purposes. I considered, that if so many *human sacrifices* were
thought

thought necessary to lay the foundation stone of this new government, some *sacrifices to reason* may be equally necessary to raise the superstructure. With this view, and in order not to increase my chagrin, I suspended my visits to the National Assembly, till such time as the Constitutional Code was completed; and having been able to procure a copy of that work sooner than the generality of the public, I sat down to peruse it with that delight which men generally feel on the first attainment of their favourite object.

In perusing the New Constitution, though I was much pleased with the *incipient declaration of Rights*—the *destruction of the Nobility*—hereditary distinctions, difference of orders, together with the equality of the Clergy, &c. &c. I found other articles did not so well agree with my general ideas of freedom. For instance, the *Sixth Article* states, that

“ All citizens being equal in the eye of the law, are equally admissible to public honours, places, and offices, according to their capacity, and without any other distinction but that of their virtues, or their talents.”

And

And yet, in the second section relative to electors, it requires, as a *qualification*, "To pay in any part of the kingdom a direct contribution, at least equal to the value of three days labour, and to produce the acquittance." — The same section likewise disqualifies "all those in a menial capacity, namely, that of servants receiving wages."

Pausing upon these articles, I perceived a manifest contradiction that at once cut up the roots of that system in which I was educated, and in which I was taught to believe the people of France had adopted, nay actually did express so in their declaration of the *Rights of Man*; for if by one article "all citizens are equally admissible to public honours," what numbers in the mass of *twenty-five millions* are excluded from this claim by the subsequent qualification "of paying the value of three days labour?" besides the whole class of menial servants are likewise excluded, let their natural pretensions be never so considerable.

I argued, that if God is no respecter of persons, why should governments, which derive under that power, be so? and how can any government, who pretends to be free, and in the very moment

that there is a
member of the
Assembly
who was a man
of no account
from his former
his office as
annual pension
He took the title
He might
He chose
He gave
He was in the
Hall with the
servant, this
He found
He saw
the Lady.

moment of laying down that freedom, as deep and as wide as the governors please, without any interruption from within, or resistance from without, thus excind the rights, the privileges, the talents, and public services of their brethren and fellow citizens, merely because they cannot advance *the price of three days labour*, or should happen, either from original poverty, or subsequent misfortunes, to be in the *state of menial servitude?*

I had scarcely recovered from these reflections, when, passing on to the *Seventh Article*, I found the same invidious distinction there.

“ No man can be named elector, if, along with the conditions necessary, in order to be an active citizen, he does not join the following :—

“ In towns of more than *six thousand* inhabitants, that of being proprietor, or life renter, of a property valued on the rolls of contribution at a revenue equal to the local value of *two hundred days labour*, or of renting a house valued on the same rolls, at a revenue equal to the value of one hundred and fifty days labour.

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*to mention that those
some men of 18 or 19 years
as well qualified, as of 60 years
so that the Difficulty is
insurmountable!*

“ In towns below six thousand inhabitants; that of being proprietor, or life renter, of a property valued on the rolls of contribution, at a revenue equal to the local value of *one hundred and fifty days labour*, or of renting a house valued on the same rolls, at a revenue equal to the value of *one hundred days labour*.

“ And in the country, that of being proprietor, or life renter, of a property valued on the rolls of contribution, at a revenue equal to the local value of one hundred and fifty days labour, or of being a farmer of lands valued on the same rolls at the *value of four hundred days labour*.

“ With respect to those who shall be at the same time proprietors, or life renters, on one hand, and tacks-men or farmers on the other, their powers, on those different accounts, shall be added together to establish their eligibility.”

Though there were other articles in this new constitution which displeased me, as what I thought incompatible with the principles of perfect freedom—such as “The members of one legislative body not to be re-elected until after an interval of one legislature”—(a circumstance

stance that deprived the nation of much wisdom and experience)—*the appointment of the judges—the King's veto, &c. &c.* yet nothing stuck with me so much as the *previous qualification of the electors and elected*.—This, said I, is an infringement of public right, and I am much afraid that this principle, once admitted, will render it impossible for the National Assembly to form a government that will ever be compatible with their first declaration of the rights of man.

Experience was to determine this point with me; and to this, sooner than I would give up my favourite attachments, I was resolved to apply with as much zeal and inspection as I was capable of. I now no longer dwelt upon *theories*, but sought diligently after *practice*. The great machine of government, consisting of all its new movements and principles, thought I, is now set in motion—let us see how it will perform its journey through the great roads of *politics* and *justice*. The fate of *twenty-five millions of people* hang upon the experiment, and they owe that justice to themselves, as well as their legislators, to wait the issue with patience, good-temper, and submission. Perhaps those articles which I looked upon as so many checks to the general principle, were wholesome and proper

restraints. Some little distinctive qualifications may be necessary in men called upon to constitute *law-givers*, or *laws*; and as these may be previous acts which society requires of us for the more durable formation of its plan, it may be the best policy to comply with the demand.

I was now in every respect of the word an *active citizen*. I rose early every day, and was from morning to night working in this capacity.—I was *beated* in the clubs on the *democratic* side of the question, and *cooled* in those of the *aristocratic*; I inspected the different reports of the municipalities, and attended the burning of assignats, with a consciousness of seeing another load thrown from off the back of a citizen. I conversed with Merchants, Shop-keepers, and Mechanics of all descriptions; acquainted myself with the nature of trade before and since the formation of the new Constitution, the state of the public debts, the reformation of the Clergy, &c. &c. In short, nothing was too great, or too little for the grasp of my enquiry; fully determined to glean as much as I could from my own views, the better to judge of the *practicability of a scheme of Government*, which was originally the wish of my heart, but which I then began to fear, for the first time, would turn out *Utopian*--My observations however now lie before

fore the public, and they will exercise their own judgment on them.—I am not however without a hope of their converting those, who are mad enough to hunt after impracticable schemes of perfection, to a more qualified and sober way of thinking. I assure them and the public, at the same time, that I exaggerate nothing, but on the contrary, the remarks which I offer them have been painfully and progressively wrung from me, which will be the more readily credited, when it is considered, that no man gives up his favourite system without some struggles in its defence.

My first enquiry led to the state of *Religion*; and here I was induced to believe, from the boundless toleration granted to all sects, as well as the thorough reformation of the Clergy in reducing them as stipendaries on the state, that these would introduce a spirit of philosophy and moderation amongst men, that would approximate nearest to primitive Christianity, and, according to Dr. Meekly, “relieve the state from a great part of its present care and incumbrance;” but, alas! so much was I mistaken, that I felt myself, almost in an instant, cured of those metaphysical notions of Religion, which my preceptor had taken such uncommon pains to instil into me.

Debauched

Debauched by their philosophical writers, the people of France (speaking generally) were losing ground in their Religion before the formation of the New Constitution; and *Deism*, at most, was the only remnant of it amongst the people of fashion. Still appearances were kept up amongst them, and amongst the lower classes there was at least the general show of a sincere devotion. The dignataries of the Church, supported by splendid revenues (which, though sometimes abused, yet often the rewards of learning, piety, and virtue) gave a reverence and awe to Religion, as well as a support to it by its liberalities, donations, and hospitalities; but, stript of these necessary coverings, the public are now permitted, nay taught, to look upon their priests as *mere engines of state*, without any distinction of character, without awe, reverence, or impression.

What are the consequences? This divine inmate of the soul—this last yet best resort of comfort under all afflictions—this wholesome paramount of all worldly laws, *Religion*, being once broken down, and men left under no other restraints than their own modes of thinking; vice and profligacy stalk abroad from their lurking holes, and batten in the face of day.

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The enjoined and daily services of the Church; which recalled men to their duties, and corrected the intemperance of their worldly passions, are now laughed at as the original projects of superstition, or the engines of priestcraft. Not to offend the laws of the National Assembly is all that is required of a good citizen. Those of God—he is to settle with himself.—Hence Paris, at this hour, is by far one of the most debauched capitals in the world, for every species of refined and vulgar vice; infomuch, that the *police*, hitherto the best in Europe, has, in a great degree, lost its influence and control.

I likewise found that the New Constitution, in thus giving the blow to Religion, had introduced a spirit of faction amongst the *pastors* themselves, which, allowing for the followers who must necessarily attach themselves to each party, promises very little short of a fanatical rebellion. What I allude to are the two distinctions of priests, called *Constitutional* and *Unconstitutional*. This religious system is productive of so much ill-blood between the citizens of the same town, and the individuals of the same family, that the adherents of those two descriptions begin with despising and reviling one another, often come
to

to blows, and frequently end with the loss of many lives. Hence the very basis of Religion, "peace, and good-will to all men," is radically destroyed, and the passions of rancour, envy, and fanatical zeal, substituted in its place. The contest is no longer for purity of life; or purity of doctrine; but which party shall prevail; so that it might be literally said of the Religion of France at this day—that it is "a Church *militant* here upon earth."

When I had fully informed myself, and lamented over the state of Religion in France, I next turned my attention to its *trade and finances*. In respect to the former, I found it in general depressed from a number of causes, that are very natural and obvious in the present convulsed state of the country. I found that those who were in the exercise of great capitals; both in the export and import lines, were cramped from two causes, first, the dread of extending themselves in speculations; which the miseries of a civil war might render fruitless; and, secondly, the distrust which foreign merchants had in giving credit to a people who had, as yet, no settled form of government. The shop-keepers, and lesser tradesmen, feel this influence in a great degree—an uncommon scarcity of money, arising from

emigrations, remittances, private hoardings, and above all, a general distrust of paper money promote all this. So that, speaking generally, except those tradesmen who are supported by the state, such as army-tailors, woollen-drapers, iron-founders, gun-powder merchants, &c. &c. the active tradesmen of France principally consist of those who furnish the immediate necessities and frivolities of life, and even those are upon a much more contracted scale than before the Revolution.

The *finances* of the nation are still in a more deplorable situation, arising partly from a too eager spirit of reform, in abolishing various branches of the revenue, incurring fresh expences, and not providing equivalent resources; but upon this subject, *facts* will best speak for themselves. The computation is, that 48,000,000 livres are monthly wanted for the public use, including the several *items* of expence. Now all that the state can possibly raise for these several months past, amount to no more than between 15 and 16,000,000 livres; whilst this immense deficiency (not above *one third* of the money expended) is supplied by the *Caisse de l'extraordinaire*, which receives the produce of the national domains.

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It is not difficult to foresee what this will lead to, by what it has already produced—a rapid decline of trade, a daily and decreasing value of national credit, together with a general alarm and want of mutual confidence; but here *facts* again supersede all reflections. In November, 1790, the assignats had a loss of *six* per cent. and in November, 1791, an increased loss of *eighteen* per cent. against silver, and *twenty-four* against gold. It is in vain that a number of those assignats are occasionally burned by order of government. Fresh ones, real and forged, constantly issue out; so that in the present financial state of France, there appears an open and direct view of national bankruptcy, except stopp'd by some of those quick and unexpected turns, which *chance* sometimes produces in triumph over all sober calculation.

Gloomy as these experimental views were, I had still some glimmer of hope in the *laws*; these may, in time, thought I, regulate all abuses—They are now afloat upon a new principle, and it must be by the operation of these, and these alone, from which all good government can be expected. With this view I examined, with as much accuracy as I was able, the different branches of the civil, military, and

and æconomical departments, which I found so far from coalescing and serving mutual purposes, they rather checked and impeded each other. The original cause of all this I found to arise from two principal discordant parts in the government, viz. DEMOCRACY and ROYALTY.—The spirit of the new government consisted of the first—the *form* was only preserved in the second. This occasioning a mutual distrust, every proposition on one side, however ultimately good for the state, is received coldly by the other—the love of country, of fame, of virtuous popularity, are out of all consideration; and the great object of reach, debate, and assiduity (the constitution having no fundamental balance to preserve its equipoise and temperature) is to *gain* increasing powers for the different parties.

The King, whether from policy, or the sluggishness of his constitution, seems inclined to give the National Assembly the *wrong of every thing*; that is to say, he almost implicitly submits to put in execution all the various rules and orders which the National Assembly prescribe him, which, when they become reduced to practice, often check and control each other; and sometimes are of that nature, that it is impossible they can be executed. This humbles the Na-

tional Assembly in the eyes of their opponents, and strengthens the hands of royalty, who watched in turn by other parties, increases the distrust, the anarchy, and confusion of the whole.

Most of the men of high rank and political talents have emigrated, or keep aloof from the great affairs of state, knowing the delicacy of the situation, and how difficult it is to give content, and administer justice at the same time.—Just “shorn of their beams” too, they have no dignities no reflect, no spirits to serve their country; hence the King is obliged to put up with such servants as he can get, not those whom the nation, in a state of tranquillity, could give him; such, therefore, are more disposed to temporize and yield to the events of the day, than enter into any settled, deep-laid system for the general good. Indeed, I found that the temper of the nation made the last very hazardous, and that the general good was so opposed by particular and partial motives of action, as to acquire very few partizans in its support.

From this general discordance of opinion in political matters, the nation has branched into parties and cabals, under the three different titles of ARISTOCRATS, REPUBLICANS, and MODERATORS.

DERATORS. The first of these parties, which are composed of almost all the nobility, are highly displeased (as might well be imagined) at a government which has torn from them all their rank and consequence in the state. The second, that of the REPUBLICANS, feel all the extravagancies of the New Constitution, and look upon the *Aristocrats* as their greatest enemies; and though their numbers are small, in proportion to the other two, their animosities are increased by the violence, the ignorance, and activity of their leaders. The third part, that of the MODERATORS, though attached to most of the leading principles of the first National Assembly, detest the *Republicans*, more than the *Aristocrats*, and are perhaps the most numerous of the three parties. In short, these clubs, and their numerous abettors, tearing one another to pieces, with the Princes and Emigrants just on the eve of entering France with a powerful force, and throwing all into confusion, together with the approaching loss of their colonies, seem to be the only benefits which the French have at present derived from the subversion of their former government.

I had now finished my survey of the New Constitution of France, not through the organs of party pamphlets, or interested people, but
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From an active and diligent enquiry made by myself upon the spot. I considered it as it stood upon paper, and, as it was afterwards reduced into practice; and the result of all was, that I was now convinced the *rights of man*, as laid down in the abstract manner of modern philosophers, are a mere pedantic abuse of elementary principles, which, in the attempt, must loosen the bands of government, and be destructive of all social freedom. I lamented the early education which instilled those principles in me; but, at the same time, congratulated myself on a discovery which enabled me, in time, to withdraw myself from the pursuit of a doctrine so ruinous to my peace of mind, as well as to my worldly concerns.

In this temper I looked over the remains of my fortune, and found it in a very shattered and deranged situation. The ready money I had brought with me from France, I had converted into *assignats*, which to convert into ready money again, I must lose 40 *per cent.* by. My estates in England were mortgaged very deep, so that what with my necessary expences, losses, and depredations from false friends, I found the fair fortune left me at my mother's death, dwindled down to little more than one hundred and fifty pounds.

pounds per year. These were mortifying reflections :—To probe the wound, however, to the quick, was now my only mode of recovery, and I had, fortunately, a spirit to accomplish it. I immediately began (great as the loss was) with disposing of my *assignats*. I next sold off my books and household furniture, and converting the whole into ready money, took a low-rented ready-furnished lodging, till such time as I could accommodate my return to England.

Whilst I was ruminating on these circumstances one morning at my breakfast-table, and arranging my future plans of life, I received a letter from my agent in Yorkshire, giving me an account of my uncle Laurence Freeman's death, and of his bequeathing me a clear estate of *three hundred pounds* per year, and about five hundred pounds personalities. Mr. Freeman was my father's second brother, who began the world with a fortune of one thousand pounds, and five hundred more which he got with his wife; yet with this little outset, he raised this estate, on which he lived comfortably, and died honoured and lamented.

Though this unexpected addition to my fortune again placed me in the line of independence,

dence, I could not help feeling for the death of a man, who had behaved so kindly to me through life, and held me in such affection at his death. He had been educated in the principles of the Church of England, which he loved as he did his country, with a becoming and Christian-like zeal. He had the good fortune (rather let me call it the good sense) not to be entangled in the paradoxes of Religion or Politics, lived happily with his family and neighbourhood, and felt it one of the greatest boasts of his life, "To make a blade of grass grow where it never grew before." He had buried a wife and two children some years before, and was a widower at the time of his death.

As these reflections arose in my mind, "Go, (said I to myself) and do thou likewise." I felt the example of my uncle strong before me; first, as his conduct had established his character and fortune, and next, as the contrary had nearly ruined mine, I set about my resolution instantly. I took post for Calais next morning, and arrived in London a few days afterwards, where, when I had arranged some little matters of business, which I left unsettled at my departure, I arrived at *Easy-ball* (the name of my late uncle's seat) about two months ago, in perfect health,

health, a competent fortune, and a recovered understanding.

With these means in my power, I should feel myself unworthy the farther protection of that Providence which has liberated me from the difficulties of ill courses and false opinions, were I not to communicate this little Sketch of my Life for the example of others, as well as to subjoin such reflections as arose to me, from the experiments I made to be *wiser* and *better* than perhaps is permitted the condition of our natures. There are disorders in politics as there are in the body, which operate as an *influenza* for the time being, and where he who has found out the cure for himself, is called upon, by every tie of gratitude and humanity, to administer that cure to others.

In the first place, then, let me confess, that from the rudiments of my education, I was inclined to think loosely of all the leading principles and ceremonies of Religion, and to establish that for myself which suited my own speculations. I doubted almost of every thing generally believed, and carried matters to such a point of refinement and abstraction, as left me

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little

little Christian consolation, either in this world,
or in my hopes of the next.

I carried the same ideas into government, where I expected no *control* from any set of men, who being born my *equals*, I thought could have no right attached or delegated to them, to exercise any power over me, though that power might be for mine and the general good. All the subordinations of life, whether in church, or state, I considered as so many links of slavery, which the cunning, or want of wisdom, of our ancestors, forged for us, and which it became the spirit of modern philosophers to break asunder. In France I expected to see those things realized, but in the attempt to work up those incongruous and impracticable materials, I was cured.

In the New Constitution of France, though I saw some articles that were incompatible with my ideas of freedom, yet others appeared to establish such perfect rights of equality as charmed me, and I waited with the utmost impatience for their effects—but in the execution I found their impracticability. In this spirit of freedom, unsettled and undefined, and passing, as it were, in

an instant from a "*hard-ruled monarchy*," amongst many millions of people; instead of bettering their former condition, it produced a number of enthusiastic and ambitious spirits, who, impatient of waiting the slow experimental progress of what they sought for, formed themselves into clubs, parties, and cabals, which, joined to a great military force, neither under the control of the King, their officers, or the National Assembly, dictated to the latter in a great degree what they should do. The consequence was, that had the National Assembly been composed of men of much greater talents and temper than they were, their resolutions must want freedom, and the essence of true legislation; but with such talents, and under such restraints, they were obliged to comply with all manner of temporary demands; whilst the grosser spirit of party, stalking abroad amongst the dregs of the people, produced all sorts of massacres, assassinations, and confiscations, driving thousands of honourable and virtuous people out of the kingdom, and forcing many more to subsist by beggary, or by crimes.

I then found, agreeable to the opinions of a modern great and celebrated writer, "That go-
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vernment,

vernment is not made of natural rights, which may and do exist in total independence of it, and exist in much greater clearness, and in a much greater degree of abstract perfection—but their abstract perfection is their practical defect. By having a right to every thing, they want every thing. Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants.—Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom—amongst these wants is to be reckoned the want, out of civil society, of a sufficient restraint upon their passions. Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done *by a power out of themselves*, and not in the exercise of its function, subject to that will, and to those passions, which it is its office to bridle and subdue.—In this sense, the *restraints on men*, as well as *their liberties*, are to be reckoned amongst their *rights*. But as the liberties and the restrictions vary with times and circumstances, and admit of infinite modifications, they cannot be settled upon any *abstract rule*, and nothing

thing is so foolish as to discuss them upon that principle." *

From these reflections I was led to consider the situation of my native country, from which I had hitherto most shamefully turned both my back and my enquiries; I there found that form of government, which, perhaps, in the condition of human wants and imperfections, is the best that can be modelled—but unquestionably so, by a comparison with all the other states of Europe. I turned with attention to the æra of our revolution (impressively called the Glorious Revolution of 1688) and found it in every respect the reverse of the French. There I saw a generous and loyal insurrection of all the great and leading families in the kingdom, to save the Constitution from the fangs of a bigotted and despotic monarch, forming themselves into no parties, no cabals for interested or ambitious designs, their's, and the public good, the only object. Hence they destroyed none of those balances and counterpoises which serve to fix a state, but, on the contrary, took every wise and cautious measure to secure and strengthen it. They obtained better securities for our privi-

* Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, p. 88.

leges—corrected the limits of prerogative—and settled doubtful and equivocal questions—but the nation kept the same ranks—the same orders—and the same privileges. A Revolution thus begun, and not sullied, or impeded by massacres, assassinations, &c. most happily moved on under a progressive melioration, and Great Britain soon saw herself above the standard of her former greatness in the improvement of her domestic prosperity and foreign consequence.

Under the mild and benevolent reign of the House of Brunswick, the progress has happily continued, even to the open avowal of some of those men who have lately been loudest in favour of the French Revolution, and a silent and fullen disparagement of our own. What I allude to is a sermon preached by the late Dr. Price, at Newington-Green, November 29, 1759, where he expatiates on our distinguished happiness as a people, by asserting from the mouth of the pulpit, “That there was no country, where liberty, both religious and civil, is enjoyed in such extent and perfection, where “we can sit, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and no one maketh us afraid.”

†
 lately reprinted at Kington's

If then the liberty of this country was such as described by Dr. Price in the year 1759 (as no doubt it was) we have since that period to boast additional improvements. Since that time the judges of the land have been rendered independent, general warrants have been done away, the influence of the crown diminished, the toleration act considerably extended, and, above all, the liberty of the press, that great PALLADIUM OF ENGLISH FREEDOM, cleared from those restraints, which, I trust, will ever prevent it from becoming an engine in the hands of future administrations.

If pleased with this review of our government, how much more pleased was I with the effects these improvements have produced upon the general face of the country, where agriculture has been highly cultivated, our national wealth increased, and our trade, commerce, and manufactures, carried to an extent unknown before in this or any other nation. Here I found the *rights of man* fully exemplified by a proper distribution of those rights to the public at large, viz. food to the hungry, employment to the industrious, security to the rich, justice to the oppressed, relief to the sick, comfort to the afflicted, protection to all; and, I will venture to assert,

assert, there is no government under Heaven, where, by the assistance of the laws and public charities, the blessings of life are dispensed with more comfort, happiness, and abundance, than under that in which we live.

In my honest and warm encomiums on our own government (which I feel myself partly carried to by a comparative view of that which I have just left) I do not pretend to say that we have arrived at the utmost limits of that perfection, which, perhaps, we may arrive at. All governments are to be mended by experience, and to have recruits to their strength, and remedies to their distempers; and whenever these last are palpably felt and acknowledged by the generality of the people, let us endeavour to remedy them, not by enlisting the passions of the vulgar, or, as my old master used to call it, "energies from without;" but by sober and constitutional appeals to the legislature, who has the power, and whose interest it should be, to be the general protector of all.

I have now finished a sketch of a considerable part of my life, which, though it has been erroneous as well as various, has, I thank God, left me a disposition with the means, at a proper age,

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to be useful to my country. I have seen the wild and delusive question of *the Rights of Man*, tried by *practice*; the surest and most decided test of truth, and though attached to this doctrine by all the strong-holds of early and insinuating education, I am now convinced of its impracticable and delusive tendencies, seeking for a more enlarged freedom in *name*; but, in *fact*, laying down the broad foundations of anarchy and confusion,

And do you, O! my COUNTRYMEN, rejoice with me, that since Providence (from views inscrutable to our researches) has permitted this mad question to be tried upon the great theatre of Europe, that we were not singled out for the *dreadful example*, but that it originated in a country, from which, I trust, we shall have the full benefit of the *issue*, without the disgraceful mischiefs of the *contest*, from which we shall be taught to clasp our freedom dearer to us from the dread of losing it, and respect the lawful government of a few — to the despotism of the many. From which we shall be taught to discriminate between those who *talk*, and those who *act for the good of their country*; between the *professors of true Religion*, and those of *modern philosophy*; between *reformers* and *deceivers*. And,

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lastly,

lastly, that we shall, upon all necessary occasions, unite as to one man, in the defence of that Constitution so carefully delivered down to us by our ancestors, and which secures to us such invaluable blessings and privileges as those of an ENGLISHMAN.

THE END.



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